

3 The Orthodox Church and Greek–Turkish relations

Religion as source of rivalry or conciliation?

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Introduction

Greece is a successor state of the Ottoman Empire with a predominantly Christian Orthodox population, a member of the Western bloc in the Cold War, and a full member of all European political institutions. The country has intimate historical, political and cultural links with three regions: Western Europe, the Balkans and the Middle East. Since independence in 1830, a combination of Ottoman political traditions and Enlightenment ideas has formed the key framework for state–religion relations.

Greece is an exception in the context of the secularisation process which has characterised much of Western Europe in recent years. In Greece, many people do not accept that ‘modernisation’ inevitably means a reduction or denial of a significant political role for the Orthodox Church. Under these circumstances, what is widely agreed to be a growing political role for religion since the end of the Cold War in many parts of the world implies in Greece even greater influence for certain religious actors. This claim is made not only in relation to domestic issues but also in relation to the country’s foreign policy, especially in relation to Turkey.

Over the years, Greek–Turkish relations have been burdened by long-lasting political problems, including territorial disputes, such as Cyprus and the Aegean, and sovereignty disputes involving minority peoples. Because of historical factors, which led to the formation of the Greek nation-state and the emergence of the Autocephalous Church of Greece, two religious institutions vie for influence among Orthodox Greeks. These two – the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Church of Greece – have long competed against each other, with a significant influence on Greek–Turkish relations. Over time, however, their positions have become increasingly bifurcated, especially in the context of the post-1999 rapprochement efforts between the two countries. While the Church of Greece, under the leadership of Archbishop Christodoulos, generally took a position which did not obviously contribute to peaceful resolution of Greek–Turkish disputes and arguably helped embed further existing prejudices, the Istanbul-based Ecumenical Patriarchate, led by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, followed a distinctively different line. Although the church was

itself a victim of Turkish anti-minority policies, it nevertheless actively promoted Greek–Turkish cooperation, including peaceful resolution of existing disputes. As a result, it managed to earn the respect of both international political and religious leaders (Williams 2008).

The contention of this chapter is that the church was able to do this through the ability of its leader to wield, what Joseph Nye calls ‘soft power’. In this chapter, following Nye, soft power is regarded as:

the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals, and policies. When our policies are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, our soft power is enhanced.

(Nye 2004: ix)

Religious soft power is exercised when religious leaders are able to convince their followers through persuasion to adopt certain positions – not only religious, but also political and social. Religious soft power may or may not serve religious moral values, such as peace, tolerance and conciliation, and may or may not contribute towards conflict resolution and mutual respect. However, it is argued in this chapter that religious soft power can be sustainable in the long run only if its exercise contributes to the reinforcement of religious moral values. In particular, international conflict, which is often underlined by religious difference, appears to be a primary policy area where religious soft power could be applied.

This chapter focuses on the role that the Orthodox Church plays in Greek–Turkish relations. As already noted, Greece has departed from the European secularisation trend. This is due to two main factors: first, the residual effect of the legacy of the Ottoman *millet* system, and second, the important position of religion in the formation, embedding and continuity of Greek nationalism. As a result, Greece has followed a distinct modernisation path in which the church has played a significant social and political role. Its significance appeared to increase after the Cold War. In this chapter we examine Greek–Turkish relations in two main contexts: first, the role over time of Orthodoxy in the dispute and, second, how the church is able to affect – and sometimes help mould – feelings of identity among many Greeks, thanks to the soft power of its leader.

The rise of a bifurcated religious order

Greeks and Turks co-inhabited parts of Southeastern Europe, Anatolia and the Eastern Mediterranean for many centuries. Following independence, the Greek nation-state turned Orthodoxy into its primary badge of identity. Greece won its independence fighting against the Ottoman Empire, and the Ottoman Turk became the ‘other’, against which ‘Greekness’ was conceptualised and measured. However, fully to subordinate Orthodoxy to the interests of the Greek nation-state it was necessary to gain clear control over its institutionalised representative: the Autocephalous Church of Greece, cut adrift from the Istanbul-

based Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1834. It then became the ‘national church’ which espoused the ‘Megali Idea’, that is, a nationalist vision aiming to replace the Ottoman entity with a Greek Empire, a resuscitation of the Byzantine Empire. Meanwhile, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, based in Istanbul, became more circumspect. This was not only because of its sensitive position under Ottoman jurisdiction, but also because of its unease with the idea of nationalism which threatened to undermine the cohesion of its multi-ethnic, multilingual followers. As it was, the Ecumenical Patriarchate barely survived the demise of the Ottoman Empire and its subsequent replacement by individual nation-states, including Turkey. Yet despite its temporal weakness, it managed to maintain a strong symbolic role as the spiritual centre of world Orthodoxy and as a custodian of Orthodox cultural heritage. In addition, the ecumenical character of the Patriarchate influenced the definition of Greekness. In contrast to the more exclusive character of the Greek national identity espoused by the Church of Greece, the Patriarchate favoured a more inclusive and tolerant definition of Greekness based on culture, not ethnicity. This informed the respective positions of both institutions regarding Greek–Turkish relations and later Turkey’s European Union membership bid.

This study aims to uncover possible explanations for this ambivalence. In addition, it aims to examine state–religion relations in Greece in the context of secularisation pressures, as well as the role of religious leadership over time. In short, it explores links between religion and nationalism in Greece over time. Given that nationalism has often used religion as a tool to try to increase cohesion and achieve mass mobilisation, I examine under what conditions religious institutions can influence political developments and exercise soft power. In addition, I attempt to establish a link between the sustainability of this power and the compatibility of policy objectives with Orthodox religious values, including peace, toleration and mutual understanding.

Citizenship and religion in Greece

The legacy of the *millet*¹ system which divided the Ottoman society along religious lines has long been influential in Greece. Religious affiliation became the basis of identity formation during the Greek struggle for independence, and Orthodoxy was the cornerstone upon which modern Greek national identity was built. Ethnic descent and language were much less significant than religion in the drawing of dividing lines between Ottoman populations. This was demonstrated in the Compulsory Population Exchange Agreement between Greece and Turkey, signed in Lausanne on 30 January 1923. In this agreement, both states agreed to a mandatory exchange of their minority populations.² In this exchange, the defining criterion of ‘Greekness’ and ‘Turkishness’ was religion. As a result, Greek-speaking Muslims from Crete were exchanged with Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians from inner Anatolia. The population exchange was the first major step towards the religious homogenisation of the population of Greece. The hitherto sizable presence of Muslims was reduced to the province of

Western Thrace on the boundary with Turkey and Bulgaria. Soon after, Greece's Jewry was among the worst hit by the Holocaust, with most of the survivors emigrating to Israel after the Second World War. This meant that by 1950 Greece had a population where around 97 per cent professed Orthodoxy, according to official censuses. For many Greeks, this rise in the proportion of Orthodox Christians further strengthened the links between Orthodoxy and Greekness. Later, however, the end of the Cold War and globalisation opened Greece to the influence of new social and economic trends, turning the country from a net exporter to a net importer of immigrants. In a similar development to that which occurred in Israel at about the same time (see Ben-Porat's chapter in this collection), this contributed to a radical change in Greece's social fabric. Since then, Greece has become a multicultural, multi-ethnic society with an immigrant population of approximately one million out of a total population of about twelve million. Most immigrants originate from Eastern and Southeastern Europe, the Middle East and South Asia and do not profess Orthodoxy. Accustomed to a mono-ethnic, monoreligious environment, Greek society has had to adapt to this new reality, rather in the same way that Israelis have had to adapt to mass immigration from the former Soviet Union (see Ben-Porat's chapter in this collection).

Under these circumstances, addressing issues of citizenship became very important. In addition, debate about the role of religion in Greek politics became more pronounced from the late 1990s, as the leadership of the Church of Greece argued for a more influential role in both politics and society. During his tenure from 1998 to 2008 Archbishop Christodoulos attempted to expand the public role of the church on a large range of issues – including citizenship – and to prevent secularisation. He also aimed to expand his authority in relation to the most important institution of Orthodoxy, the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Despite the decimation of Istanbul's Orthodox community and the serious problems which hampered its operation,³ the Ecumenical Patriarchate has maintained ecclesiastical jurisdiction in parts of the Greek territory as well as a strong appeal to the Greek faithful.

The legal basis of state–church relations in Greece

As already noted, religion was a key element in the formation of modern Greek national identity. More specifically, Christianity became a *de facto* condition of Greek citizenship. Shortly after the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence, Article 2§2 of the First Constitution promulgated on 1 January 1822 at the First Revolutionary National Assembly in Epidaurus, stated: 'The autochthonous residents of the Greek Territory who believe in Jesus Christ are Greeks and enjoy all the civil rights without any limitation and difference.'⁴ Later ethnic criteria were added to the religious ones; nevertheless Greek nationalism used Orthodoxy as the primary marker of Greek national identity. As a result of this, a special relationship between the state and the Orthodox Church was instituted. This was reflected not only in the country's Constitution and in many of its laws but also in the informal yet strong political position of the church. According to Article 3 of the Constitution,

- 1 The prevailing religion in Greece is that of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ. The Orthodox Church of Greece, acknowledging our Lord Jesus Christ as its head, is inseparably united in doctrine with the Great Church of Christ in Constantinople and with every other Church of Christ of the same doctrine, observing unwaveringly, as they do, the holy apostolic and synodal canons and sacred traditions. It is autocephalous and is administered by the Holy Synod of serving Bishops and the Permanent Holy Synod originating thereof and assembled as specified by the Statutory Charter of the Church in compliance with the provisions of the Patriarchal Tome of June 29, 1850 and the Synodal Act of September 4, 1928.
- 2 The ecclesiastical regime existing in certain districts of the State shall not be deemed contrary to the provisions of the preceding paragraph.
- 3 The text of the Holy Scripture shall be maintained unaltered. Official translation of the text into any other form of language, without prior sanction by the Autocephalous Church of Greece and the Great Church of Christ in Constantinople, is prohibited.

(Hellenic Parliament 2001: 18)

Article 13 of the Constitution, which regulates religious freedom, is meant to balance the prerogatives of the Orthodox Church, acknowledged in Article 3. However, religious freedom is guaranteed for all ‘known religions’ in the following terms:

- 1 Freedom of religious conscience is inviolable. The enjoyment of civil rights and liberties does not depend on the individual’s religious beliefs.
- 2 All known religions shall be free and their rites of worship shall be performed unhindered and under the protection of the law. The practice of rites of worship is not allowed to offend public order or the good usages. Proselytism is prohibited.
- 3 The ministers of all known religions shall be subject to the same supervision by the State and to the same obligations toward it as those of the prevailing religion.
- 4 No person shall be exempt from discharging his obligations to the State or may refuse to comply with the laws because of his religious convictions.
- 5 No oath shall be imposed or administered except as specified by law and in the form determined by law.

(Hellenic Parliament 2001: 26)

Also of major significance is the reference to religion in Article 16, which deals with education affairs. According to Article 16§2:

Education constitutes a basic mission for the State and shall aim at the moral, intellectual, professional and physical training of Greeks, the

development of national and religious consciousness and at their formation as free and responsible citizens.

(Hellenic Parliament 2001: 30)

The closeness between the Greek state and the Orthodox Church of Greece, reaffirmed by this Article, means a privileged position in relation both to other Christian confessions and to non-Christian religions. The church was often perceived by state officials and public opinion as part of the state apparatus, while bishops have often exceeded their strictly religious duties by making political statements on issues such as human rights, education, family policy and foreign policy. Church prelates frequently claim to represent the opinion of their flock, while often adopting both a nationalistic and an isolationist discourse concerning various issues, including: globalisation, European integration, conflict resolution and immigration. This trend peaked with the election of Archbishop Christodoulos in 1998, a figure who attempted to consistently expand the church's involvement in public affairs.

The 'identity card' crisis was a prime example of his new conceptualisation of the greater public role of the Church of Greece (Molokotos-Liederman 2003: 296–7). Christodoulos opposed the governmental decision to eliminate any reference to religion in the notion of Greek identity. He organised two major demonstrations against the government's decision, and about three million Greek citizens signed a petition drafted by the church, which demanded a referendum on the issue. Although the government did not succumb to these demands, Christodoulos maintained his claim for a major public role for the church, underpinned by his great personal popularity, manifested in several opinion polls of the time (Mavrogordatos 2003: 130–1). Only a major corruption scandal in the Church of Greece in 2005 limited Christodoulos' popularity, as well as his claim to play a major role in Greek politics.

Before delving into the Church of Greece's position on Greek–Turkish relations, it is necessary to provide some information about the history of the relationship between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Church of Greece.

The historical background

The Ecumenical Patriarchate became the only Eastern Roman (or 'Byzantine') institution which survived the collapse of the Empire and the fall of Constantinople in 1453. As the Byzantine aristocracy was annihilated, converted to Islam or fled to Western Europe, the Patriarchate remained as the sole institutional point of reference for the subject Ottoman Christians. The Ecumenical Patriarch became the representative of the Ottoman Orthodox Christians in the eyes of the Ottoman authorities.⁵ While the Ecumenical Patriarchate's jurisdiction in the late Byzantine era was sharply contested by the rise of Bulgarian and Serbian medieval kingdoms, in the Ottoman era it managed to expand its jurisdiction in the central and western Balkans with the consent of Ottoman authorities. This allowed for the accumulation of considerable political power in the hands of the

incumbent Patriarch and familiarised the Ottoman Orthodox subjects with the idea of clerical rule and the convergence of political and religious authority.⁶ As a result, the Patriarch and his bishops were seen as *ex officio* political leaders of the Ottoman Orthodox Christians. This status was only challenged with the advent of the Enlightenment era and the repercussions it caused among the Ottoman Orthodox elites, who became exposed to nationalism and secularism. The French Revolution inspired a Greek merchant bourgeoisie which mainly lived in Ottoman and European cities. Many among such people played an active role both in the leadership of the Ottoman Orthodox population and in the organisation of a nationalist republican uprising in the nineteenth century against Ottoman rule, whose aim was to establish a secular republican nation-state. Most of them adopted nationalism and sought to establish a modern Greek nation-state whose primary identity reference point would not be the Orthodox Byzantine Empire but Greek classical antiquity.⁷

The establishment of the Kingdom of Greece in 1830 did not provide good omens for the continuation of the status quo.⁸ The government of the new nation-state wanted to bring domestic religious expressions under sole control. Religious control and authority by an institution which was an integral part of the Ottoman imperial realm was deemed unacceptable, and the establishment of a 'national' state church became one of the first government priorities. The Regent Triumvirate, which was established until the juvenile Bavarian Prince Otto von Wittelsbach came of age, proceeded swiftly to sever the ties of the local church with the Patriarchate. Headed by the intellectual and priest Theoklitos Farmakidis, the Autocephalous Church of Greece was proclaimed in 1834. This comprised the first nationalist schism within the Orthodox realm, dealing a grave blow to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Relations between the Patriarchate and the Church of Greece were restored only with the Patriarchal Tome of 29 June 1850, yet the repercussions of the event were felt throughout the nineteenth century. The Bulgarian Schism of 1870, the creation of a Bulgarian National Church – which appealed to Bulgarian-speaking Orthodox Christians – and the direct challenge of the Patriarchate's authority even within Ottoman territories, led in 1872 to the declaration that nationalism was a heresy (Matalas 2002).

However, a new status quo emerged following decisive wars between 1912 and 1922 which caused the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, resulting in the inclusion of former Ottoman provinces and Patriarchal dioceses into Greece. A new question then emerged: Would the Patriarchate cede jurisdiction over the dioceses of the provinces the Ottoman Empire ceded to Greece? The issue was resolved with the Synodal Act of 1928, which acknowledged the tutelary rights of the Patriarchate over these dioceses but transferred their administration to the Church of Greece. While this arrangement worked for decades, it was challenged by Archbishop Christodoulos in the early 2000s. He claimed that the jurisdiction of the Church of Greece should coincide with the territory of Greece. This was a direct challenge to the 1928 compromise. A serious crisis in the relations of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Church of Greece erupted, only resolved in 2003 when the Church of Greece withdrew its claims. However, various

problems continued to affect their relationship, including: Greek–Turkish relations, where their positions differed greatly.

The political background

Greek–Turkish relations have long been problematic, for various historical and political reasons. Greece gained its independence from the Ottoman Empire, the predecessor state of the Republic of Turkey, in 1830. Greece and the Ottoman Empire fought wars in 1897 and 1912, while Greece also confronted Turkish nationalist forces who later established the Republic of Turkey between 1919 and 1922. Greek and Turkish forces clashed most recently over Cyprus in 1974. Additionally, the formation of Greek and Turkish national identities developed in relation to the Muslim Turk or Orthodox *Rum*-Greek⁹ identity, which served as the quintessential ‘other’. From the time of the 1912 and 1922 wars, the Cyprus issue was a source of considerable tension in Greek–Turkish relations, especially from the 1950s. The Greek-instigated coup and subsequent Turkish invasion of 1974 led to a new status quo deemed unacceptable by the international community. Persistent efforts to reunify the divided island on the basis of a bizonal, bicomunal federation have, however, so far failed.

Regarding the Aegean disputes, Greece and Turkey disagree on the extent of their territorial waters, continental shelf, airspace, flight information region (FIR) and the militarisation of some Greek Aegean islands, while Turkey has recently disputed the sovereignty of Greece over several islets and rocks of the Aegean. The status of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Greek Orthodox minority in Istanbul and the two Aegean islands and the Muslim minority of Western Thrace have also caused considerable tension. Overall, these factors have led to a very confrontational environment, with each state perceiving the other as a major security threat, leading to a very expensive arms race which served to militarise Greek–Turkish land and maritime borders. During the Cold War, Greece prioritised the ‘Eastern threat’ (Turkey) over the ‘Northern threat’ (the Soviet bloc) in its strategic planning. Greece’s membership of the European Economic Community (EEC; later European Union, EU) in 1981 provided Greek foreign policy with additional leverage against Turkey. Thanks to the unanimity rule in EU decision-making, any improvement of EEC–Turkey relations became conditional upon Greek consent. This was not given because of the stalemate on the Cyprus question and Greek–Turkish bilateral disputes.

In the 1990s, there were two major crises. In January 1996, Greece and Turkey came to the brink of war over the sovereignty of the Imia/Kardak islet in the eastern Aegean. In February 1999, the leader of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan, PKK) and Turkey’s then most wanted person, Abdullah Öcalan, was captured by Turkey after having found refuge at the Greek Embassy in Nairobi. These two events marked the lowest point in Greek–Turkish relations since 1974. Yet things were soon to improve. Through close cooperation between Foreign Ministers George Papandreou and Ismail Cem, a new era of Greek–Turkish relations began (Evin 2004: 8–10, 2005: 396–8). The tragic

coincidence of two earthquakes, which hit Istanbul and Athens within a month of each other in August and September 1999, and the spontaneous support of both peoples to the plight of the earthquake victims, suggested that rapprochement efforts might not meet with grassroots opposition. In December 1999, in Helsinki, the Council of the European Union named Turkey as a candidate state for EU membership (Grigoriadis 2006: 138–45). Greece, which had since its EEC membership been the fiercest opponent of an upgrade in EU–Turkey relations before Greek–Turkish disputes were resolved, became one of the most vocal supporters of Turkey’s EU membership. An exponential rise of trade and investment between the two countries further strengthened the improved climate in Greek–Turkish relations. The initiation of an unprecedented political reform process in Turkey aiming at the fulfilment of the Copenhagen Criteria for EU membership raised hope among many Greeks that more conciliatory views would increasingly prevail on all bilateral issues.

Nonetheless, Greek–Turkish disputes in the Aegean remained unresolved, while no breakthrough was achieved on the issue of the rights of Turkey’s Greek minority. Much effort was put into attempts to resolve the Cyprus question, a key element in popular perceptions of continued Greek–Turkish conflict (Çarkoğlu and Kirişçi 2004: 138–45). In late 2002 a comprehensive United Nations plan was offered to both sides on the eve of the island republic’s membership of the European Union. Yet in the 24 April 2004 referendum, Greek Cypriots rejected the proposed solution of the Cyprus question, which left the Cyprus issue unresolved after Cyprus joined the Union in 2004. The change of government in Greece in 2004 did not change the official discourse regarding Turkey’s EU aspirations. However, as in other EU member states, the debate on Turkey’s European or Asian identity and its ability to adapt to European political principles has persisted. This debate was also informed by Turkey’s record on protecting the rights of its Greek minority and the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Soon two lines appeared on the issue. The first maintained that efforts to bring Turkey into the European Union were in vain and that Turkey was a cultural misfit for the European family. The second insisted that Turkey was eligible for EU membership if it fulfilled the Copenhagen Criteria like any other member state. In other words, It was in Greece’s interest to promote Turkey’s transformation into a fully consolidated democracy, in which minority rights would be fully respected and which would help resolve its disputes with its neighbours, such as Greece and Cyprus, following negotiations on the basis of international law. Turkey’s EU accession process provided a suitable framework for the promotion of greater democracy and the resolution of Greek–Turkish disputes. Religious actors also positioned themselves on this issue. This was no surprise for the Church of Greece, as Archbishop Christodoulos had repeatedly stated that he reserved the right to intervene in the public debate on issues of ‘national significance’ and to speak on behalf of the church or ‘the Greek Orthodox nation’. In the case of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which normally avoided any intervention in Greek political affairs, this issue was of the utmost significance, as the very existence of itself and the Greek minority also depended on the course of EU–Turkey relations.

The position of the Church of Greece on Turkey's accession to the EU

The Church of Greece under Christodoulos questioned the Greek–Turkish rapprochement and opposed Turkey's membership of the European Union. The line followed was essentially a hard-line Greek nationalist one, in which Turkey was represented as a quintessentially non-European country which still represented an existential threat to both European civilisation and Christianity. Based on these assumptions, efforts to promote a Greek–Turkish rapprochement, before the resolution of the Cyprus and Aegean disputes according to Greek views were treated with suspicion, if not outright hostility, by some bishops. Efforts to achieve compromise solutions were deemed to be either naïve or treacherous, as Turkey would thus be rewarded for its expansionist agenda and encouraged to advance it further. In these talks, Turks were often portrayed as barbaric infidels, unable to behave properly, or at best powerless pawns in the hands of an evil state. Selective use of history was also made in attempts to corroborate such claims. In 2003, Archbishop Christodoulos launched an even more vitriolic attack against the Turkish nation during a service in memory of an Orthodox saint executed in the Ottoman era:

That is why they [the Turks] impaled him. And now these people want to enter the European Union. Barbarians cannot enter the family of Christians. We cannot live together. This is not out of malevolence. This is consistency, and we should keep it in order not to lose everything in the name of diplomacy. Diplomacy is good, but we cannot forget our history ... Those who disagree with us do so because they know no history ... We cannot forget everything and betray the struggles of our fathers.

(Bailis 2003)

Traumatic events in Greek history were repeatedly used to promote a view of an unchangeably barbaric Turkey. In numerous cases, Christodoulos referred to the killings of Pontic Greeks by Turkish forces in the early twentieth century, accusing foreign powers for their lack of redemption of the victims and reassuring the victims that in the end they would be vindicated, adding: 'We will never forget the inextinguishable stigma of the perpetrators.' Later he also stated: 'The Turkish people is induced by its fanatical leadership and shows baseness and villainy ... Let us not believe that Turks can become Europeanised. I am afraid that Europe will become Turkified' (Bailis 2005).

Such positions were too far-fetched even for the right of the Greek political spectrum. Coming under pressure for his openly racist views in the new political environment created by the Greek–Turkish rapprochement efforts, Christodoulos followed a more circumspect line in his opposition to Turkey's EU accession. Despite himself opposing European integration, he subscribed to the line of leading European federalists who saw Turkey's potential EU membership as a stumbling block to the process of European integration. In that view, the

accession of Turkey threatened the very feasibility of the European project, because of its relative poverty, size and allegedly ‘non-European’ culture. In late 2005, when asked in an interview whether he still thought that Turkey should not enter the European Union despite the EU decision to start accession negotiations, Christodoulos responded:

I think what is more important than the opinions of religious leaders is the clearly negative position on this issue [Turkey’s EU membership] of paramount and historical figures of the European community such as Giscard d’Estaing and Jacques Delors. Even more important is the opinion of the European – as well as the Greek – citizens, who in recent polls have overwhelmingly opposed Turkey’s EU membership. We should also not forget that the rejection of the European Constitution in big countries such as France and Holland is said to have occurred to express the opposition of the European public opinion to that possibility. Nowadays, many political analysts and intellectuals express the concern that instead of Europeanising Turkey, we may end up Turkifying Europe. There is no need to add anything else.

(Christodoulos 2005)

His rhetoric and opinions could not go unaddressed in Turkey. Columnists fiercely reacted to his harsh attacks against Turkey and Turks, calling him a ‘psychopath’, contrasting his intemperate comments with the new era of Greek–Turkish relations at both political and social levels. In the words of Oktay Ekşi, a major columnist on the popular Turkish daily *Hürriyet*:

The Turkish and the Greek people want to forget the bad memories of the past. And they actually did. But the church cannot accept that. To tell the truth, we cannot understand this. Does the church exist as religious institution to spread love or hate and animosity?

(Ekşi 2004)

Addressing a significant political audience in Greece, Christodoulos did not defend Christian principles but Greek nationalist stereotypes against Turkey. He used his persuasive powers – arguably a form of religious ‘soft power’ – in order to try to rekindle old animosities and instil fear and animosity in relation to continuing rapprochement efforts. This served to relegate him to the level of a fringe political figure, who enjoyed strong sympathy from a few but also strong criticism from many others. This had the effect of severely limiting his soft power potential, not least because his forcefully expressed opinions appeared to many to be in direct contrast to what were widely understood to be universal religious principles, such as peace, toleration and reconciliation.

The position of the Ecumenical Patriarchate

The position of the Ecumenical Patriarchate on Greek–Turkish relations was diametrically different. Following a line of reconciliation, it defended the need for dialogue and cooperation between Greece and Turkey. This position also fitted the Christian virtues of toleration and peace-building. In an interview in the Greek daily newspaper *Eleftherotypia* in 1999, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew stated:

This is our principle, peace and brotherhood of humans and peoples. This principle also refers to Greek–Turkish relations. We have repeatedly taken a position on Greek–Turkish relations . . . We have always supported the need for good neighbourly relations, friendship and cooperation between the two peoples . . . Because of that position we have been criticised by a part of the Greek press. Nonetheless, we will not cease to fervently support the good neighbourly relations and cooperation of Greece and Turkey for the benefit of both peoples.

(Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I 1999)

This statement was not well received by Greek nationalists inside and outside the Church of Greece, as it appeared that one of the foremost victims of Turkish nationalist policies, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, was taking both a conciliatory and a moderate position on Greek–Turkish relations. As a result, Bartholomew was accused of ‘supporting Turkish and not Greek interests’, while some columnists suggested the transfer of the seat of the Ecumenical Patriarchate from Istanbul to Greece. Thessaloniki, Mount Athos and the island of Patmos were – at times – suggested as possible seats (Giannaras 1999). On this issue, Greek and Turkish nationalist circles were in harmony, as several Turkish nationalist groups demanded the expulsion of the Patriarchate from Turkey (Kerincişiz 2006). They were especially annoyed by the Patriarch organising Masses in abandoned churches throughout Anatolia (Yıldırım and Tuna 2006).

Bartholomew’s attempt to propose a new approach for Greek minority questions was of major significance in this context. The Patriarchate did not ignore the persistent violations of its rights and the rights of the Greek minority. Turkey’s European perspective was thus perceived as the only realistic hope for improvement in the field of minority rights, which could benefit not only the dwindling Greek minority of Istanbul but also the Ecumenical Patriarchate itself. Being a victim of Turkish minority discrimination policies, the Patriarchate was naturally interested in the democratic reform process, which would, it was expected, include provisions for the protection of minority rights and the restitution of past injustices. This entailed careful screening of the reform process and criticism in the cases where insufficient progress was made. Closure of the religious seminary in Heybeliada (Chalki) became one of the key issues in the reform process. Turkey’s refusal to allow the reopening of the seminary was one of the clearest manifestations that the reform process still faced serious short-

comings (Grigoriadis 2008: 36). However, positive steps were also recognised, including Turkey's bid to join the European Union, which would necessarily involve complete resolution of all minority problems, including those related to the Greek minority. Addressing the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in early 2007, Bartholomew explained:

At this point, we must mention that the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the surrounding Greek-Orthodox minority in Turkey feel that they still do not enjoy full rights, such as the refusal to acknowledge and recognise a legal status to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the prohibition of the operation of the Theological School of Chalki, property issues and many more. We do recognise, however, that many reforms have been made and some remarkable steps have been taken for the accession of the internal law towards the European standard. Therefore, we have always supported the European perspective of Turkey in anticipation of the remaining steps to be taken according to the standards of the European Union.

(Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I 2007)

Turkey's convergence with EU standards on minority rights was presented not as a concession but as something essentially beneficial for the country. Recognising the rights of the Patriarchate and the Greek minority would not only pose no threat for Turkey, it would also benefit it, as this would comprise a clear manifestation of the maturity of its democracy. Referring to the issue of the Chalki Seminary in 1999, Bartholomew argued:

We will not cease to wish that Turkey realises that the reopening of the Chalki Religious Seminary not only does not harm its interests, but will be on the contrary to its benefit. Orthodox and non-Orthodox youth will come to study here ... When they return to their home countries and take over responsible positions, they will boast of having studied at the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the historic Chalki School, in modern Turkey, in which religious freedom is so protected that it allows for the operation of such a Christian Seminary, although the vast majority of its population is Muslim.

(Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I 1999)

On this issue, Bartholomew sided with many among the Turkish liberal intelligentsia who fervently supported the EU reform process and did not see it as antithetical to Turkish national security interests (Birand 2007). In fact, many reformist intellectuals in Turkey suggested a new definition of Turkish national interest, with acknowledgment of minority rights henceforward not perceived as a major threat to Turkish security. On the contrary, such a development might actually improve Turkish security, as minority members would eventually feel themselves to be respected as citizens of the Republic of Turkey (Grigoriadis 2007: 431–2).

Nonetheless, perhaps the most impressive statement made in that interview referred to the issue of nationalism. Bartholomew reminded the interviewer of

the 1872 synodal decision which had declared 'nationalism' as heresy and pointed to what he regarded as the fundamentally anti-Christian nature of nationalist ideologies:

We would like to remind [you] that nationalism has been condemned by the Church as 'heresy' ... The revival of nationalism is a burning contemporary question, as it is directed against Orthodoxy and Christianity in general, even when the Christian and in general the religious element is presented as a means to further nationalist goals. Nationalism isolates the peoples, directs them against each other, while the quintessence of Christianity is love and brotherhood of peoples. The unity of humankind is one of the basic messages of Apostle Paul and the whole Church, as well as the finding of true philosophical and biological thought. From that perspective, racism has been worldwide condemned and is related to nationalism, from which, though, one should differentiate laudable patriotism.

(Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I 1999)

This position was an explicit condemnation of Greek and Turkish nationalism from a theological vantage point, which clearly dissonated with the stance of the Church of Greece on the same issue. Bartholomew chastised divisive and intolerant elements apparently inherent to all nationalisms. This could only cause major surprise in large parts of Greek public opinion, which had been familiarised with the identification of Orthodoxy and Greek nationalism and the depiction of Orthodoxy as Greece's 'national religion'. In response to the divisive effects of nationalism, Bartholomew suggested interreligious dialogue as the means to bring about convergence, reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.

That however which is accomplished fluently through interreligious dialogues is the cultivation of a spirit of tolerance, reconciliation and peaceful coexistence of the faithful of the various religions, free from fanaticism and phobias. Contrary to political positions that many times foster the spirit of conflict and confrontation, catching thus within it both victims and victimisers, we try and pursue sowing the spirit of equal rights and responsibilities for all and for their peaceful cooperation, independently of their religion. For only through the opening of hearts and minds and the acceptance of one's difference as an equal value to our own is it possible to build peace in this world.

There is one more accomplishment and goal of the interreligious dialogues that is not of any less importance. This is the enrichment of the mind and perception of each faithful by considering things through the religion of somebody else. This enrichment releases us from partiality; it allows us to have a higher and wider understanding of beliefs; it fortifies the intellect and very often it leads us to a deeper experience of the truth and to a very advanced level of our growth in the presence of the divine revelation.

(Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I 2007)

This message referred not only to the Greek–Turkish conflict, which is to some degree informed by religious differences, but also to the wider divide perceived to exist between the ‘West’ and the ‘Islamic world’. Bartholomew has also been vocal on this issue. For example, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has frequently organised events promoting interreligious dialogue with emphasis on issues such as the environment. These have included various symposia on environmental protection, including one on board a vessel on the Amazon river in July 2006 and another held in Greenland the following year. Interlocutors have included major figures of Islam in Turkey, including Fethullah Gülen and leaders of American Jewry such as Chief Rabbi David Rosen, President of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations. Overall, such activities have earned Bartholomew great respect while increasing his international influence, in contrast to his continuing weak domestic position in Turkey.

Explaining the difference

Such a sharp difference between the approach of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Church of Greece on Greek–Turkish relations can be explained by allusion to various factors. First, we can point to an instrumentalist explanation for the position of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. That is, the Patriarchate and Turkey’s Greek minority have both paid a very high price because of the long-term tension in Greek–Turkish relations. It is no coincidence that the decline of the Greek minority population in Turkey was positively correlated with the emergence and escalation of the Cyprus question after the Second World War. Discriminatory measures and attacks against Turkey’s Greeks were seen in both Turkey and Greece as a form of ‘retaliation’ against anti-Turkish Cypriot incidents in Cyprus between the 1950s and 1970s. This brought Turkey’s Greek minority to the brink of extinction and the Ecumenical Patriarchate under unprecedented pressure, as it became unable to manage its property or educate its clergy while facing serious difficulties in performing even its most basic functions. It was hoped that improvement of Greek–Turkish relations would help defuse the pressure traditionally exerted on Turkey’s Greek minority and the Patriarchate and also pave the way for Turkey’s European integration, as Greece, historically the biggest opponent of the improvement of EEC–Turkey relations, became an ardent supporter of Turkey’s EU membership. Shortcomings in minority rights protection, however, never distanced the Patriarchate from the strategic target of Turkey’s European integration. A European Turkey, with a thriving economy and a fully democratic political system, would, it was believed, be a much more suitable host country for an institution of the international stature of the Patriarchate.

Nonetheless, instrumentalist reasoning is insufficient to explain overall the position of the Ecumenical Patriarchate on Greek–Turkish relations. One also needs to consider the role of leadership and agency. At the theological level, Bartholomew consistently advocated the Christian principles of toleration, peace and reconciliation against Greek or Turkish nationalism. He also realised that the European Union was a political project, which stood for the reconciliation of the

European peoples and the overcoming of nationalist conflicts in the European continent. He understood that Turkey's EU membership could greatly contribute not only to the reconciliation of Turkey with Greece, but also to the much greater task of building bridges between Muslims and Christians. This position gained Bartholomew greater international respect and recognition, manifested for example in May 2008, when he was included in the *Time* magazine annual list of the world's 100 most influential people. The Archbishop of Canterbury and Head of the Anglican Church, Rowan Williams, justified the *Time* decision as follows:

Patriarch Bartholomew, however, has turned the relative political weakness of the office into a strength, grasping the fact that it allows him to stake out a clear moral and spiritual vision that is not tangled up in negotiation and balances of power. And this vision is dominated by his concern for the environment.

(Williams 2008)

In addition, while Turkish authorities insisted on viewing him as the religious leader of a tiny religious minority of Turkey, Bartholomew was officially received and visited by heads of states, prime ministers and religious leaders throughout the world. In this regard, it is appropriate to mention, for example, his visit to the United States in March 2002, when he was received by the US president with head-of-state honours.

As regards the Church of Greece, one needs to consider its growing political voice in order to understand its position on Greek–Turkish relations. The increased political voice of the Church of Greece has followed its closer affiliation with the state. Church officials felt empowered to make their positions known on a range of political issues, which – in most cases – resembled positions taken by parties on the far right of the Greek political spectrum, such as the Popular Orthodox Rally (Laikos Orthodoxos Synagermos, LAOS). This trend became stronger under Archbishop Christodoulos. The adoption of a populist, nationalist and xenophobic agenda was condemned by a large part of the Greek intelligentsia, while having considerable appeal among many conservative voters who saw Christodoulos as a political leader who did not hesitate to defend narrowly defined Greek national interests at all costs. In that context, Greek–Turkish rapprochement efforts were often seen as a foreign ploy to promote a fake reconciliation between Greece and Turkey at the expense of Greek national interests. Given the key role Orthodoxy has played in the formation of Greek national identity, Christodoulos was eager to play a leading role in Greek nationalist mobilisation. The conciliatory stance of the Ecumenical Patriarchate was conveniently ignored or undermined, regarded as a product of foreign pressure or even as ‘treason’. Christodoulos’ political agenda allied him with the right of the Greek political spectrum, and this inevitably meant his identification with this strand of Greek public opinion on the issue of Greek–Turkish rapprochement. The conflation of religion with nationalism, populism and direct political

involvement may have led to short-term political gains and appeal among a part of Greek population, but in the long term it helped to undermine his religious soft power. In other words, his ability was reduced to influence and persuade more widely, by setting a moral paradigm based on religious principles.

The failure of this policy was implicitly accepted by the prelates of the Church of Greece. After the death of Archbishop Christodoulos in January 2008 the Holy Synod elected Bishop Ieronymos as his successor. The new Archbishop was the best-known opponent of Christodoulos' strategy to claim a key political role for the church, including issues of foreign policy generally and Greek–Turkish relations specifically. In his enthronement speech, Ieronymos underlined that he was an ecclesiastical leader and not a politician. In the first months of his tenure, he followed a line distinctly different from that of his predecessor. He refrained from interventions in foreign policy affairs – including Greek–Turkish relations and Turkey's EU candidacy – and restricted his activity to strictly religious issues. One of the first tasks was notably the restoration of good relations between the Church of Greece and the Ecumenical Patriarchate. His appointment also raised hopes that a reconsideration of the relationship between the Greek state and the Church of Greece was possible.

Conclusions

Given the strong imprint of Orthodoxy on the definition of Greek national identity, the divergent positions of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Church of Greece on Greek–Turkish relations illustrate how both institutions have over time suggested alternative versions of what it means to be Greek. The Church of Greece under Christodoulos saw the continuation of Greek–Turkish rivalry as a substantial part of Greek national and Orthodox religious identity and opposed any rapprochement efforts and Turkey's EU integration. The Ecumenical Patriarchate, however, did not consider Greek–Turkish conflict as a defining element of Greek identity. A more inclusive, tolerant version of Greekness was championed, which was not built on animosity towards Turkey. Instead, this stance highlighted the potential merits of Turkey's EU accession for both Greeks and Turks, including the key prize of resolution of existing disputes between the countries. In addition, it became clear how the interaction between the Greek state and the Orthodox Church could very easily facilitate the instrumentalisation of religion for nationalist purposes in foreign policy-making. This highlights how state-affiliated religious actors may side with state positions, which in some cases are characterised by both nationalist bias and a realist, bleakly Hobbesian, view of international relations.¹⁰ Under these circumstances, religious actors may behave more like state officials or politicians promoting state interests or the views of their own political clientele, rather than encouraging conflict resolution, peace and toleration. On the other hand, lack of links with a state may be a necessary but not sufficient condition for the development of positions loyal to religious principles such as peace and conciliation. Lack of alignment with state interests allows for the adoption of different positions on issues of foreign

policy, which may be closer to a cooperative Kantian view of international relations.

The autonomy of religious institutions from the state apparatus may be considered as an additional reason for their support for conflict resolution and reconciliation. Under these conditions, religious leaders may underplay the importance of secular nationalist concerns and address foreign policy questions on the basis of religious principles. Moreover, we also need to address the importance of agency. For example, the personality of a religious leader can have a major impact on the formation of the position of the religious institution on various issues, including foreign policy. Finally, it appears that in the long run success in the use of religious soft power depends on consistent adherence to clear religious principles. Consistency between political goals and religious principles may lead to enduring or even increasing soft power of religious actors. Religious actors who prefer to serve a radical political agenda and make policy choices inconsistent with religious values such as peace, toleration and conciliation may have to face a decrease of their ability to persuade wide segments of the society that their position is one they should support. Judging by the evidence presented in this chapter, viewing religion as an agent of pacification and conflict resolution is not only consistent with religious principles, but also may earn considerable religious, social and political appeal.

Notes

- 1 The *millet* system was the main political framework according to which the Ottoman Empire ruled its subjects, based on their religious affiliation. On this see Braude (1982).
- 2 For more on this, see Hirschon (2003).
- 3 Among several grievances, one could highlight the official rejection of the Patriarchate's ecumenical character and legal personality. This included the legal personality of numerous Orthodox pious religious foundations. This paved the way for systematic confiscations and usurpations of immovable assets.
- 4 Interestingly there was no differentiation between Orthodox and Catholic Christians, despite the identification of the *Rum millet* with Orthodoxy. Apparently this stance aimed to co-opt the Greek-speaking Catholic population of the Aegean, as well to avoid antagonising the Western powers. However, the identification of Greek national identity with Orthodoxy became clear following independence in 1830.
- 5 For more information on the *millet* system, see Braude (1982).
- 6 The case of Cyprus and the religious-political rule of Archbishop Makarios from the 1950s to the 1970s is a highly indicative late survival of the Ottoman convulsion of religious and political authority.
- 7 The doyen of Greek Enlightenment, Adamantios Korais, was a primary advocate of such ideas.
- 8 For more information on the relations between Greek nationalism and the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the nineteenth century, see Matalas (2002).
- 9 The term *Rum* included all the Orthodox subjects of the Ottoman Empire, regardless of their ethnic origin and language. The term 'Greek' referred to the Orthodox subjects which embraced the Greek nationalist project.
- 10 For a comparison between Hobbesian and Kantian approaches to Greek-Turkish disputes, see Kirişçi (2002).

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